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Chairman: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

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GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

Mr. PENNANEACH (Togo) (interpretation from French): As other speakers have done before me, I should like to extend to you, Sir, warmest congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. My delegation believes that it was your diplomatic competence and skill that led the Committee to choose you unanimously to lead our work.

Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau on their election, and to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, on his devotion to the cause of disarmament and peace.

Are we on the threshold of disarmament? It is true, after all, that for some time now we have been witnessing an acceleration of history that has confounded all predictions.

In December 1987 the Soviet Union and the United States signed the Treaty on the elimination of short- and medium-range missiles. Then, on 19 November 1990, the Treaty on the reduction of conventional armed forces in Europe was signed - a Treaty committing the signatories to establishing a secure and stable balance of conventional armed forces at lower levels. Subsequently, 31 July 1991, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) was concluded, thanks to close bilateral cooperation between Washington and Moscow. Finally, over the past few weeks we have welcomed statements that really prove that the world is in a state of change. For instance, on 27 September 1991 the President of the United States, George Bush, announced his proposal to eliminate tactical nuclear weapons wherever they might be

(Mr. Pennaneach, Togo)

based, and on 5 October 1991 President Mikhail Gorbachev accepted this proposal and expanded upon it.

The delegation of Togo welcomes all these initiatives, which bear witness to the growing awareness of nations that they must, at all costs, prevent nuclear disaster - the greatest challenge of our times. It is indeed a challenge because, in view of the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons and the constant qualitative improvements in their technology, nuclear weapons have been - and could be for some time to come - the most formidable threat to the very existence of mankind.

Taking a decision is one thing; putting it into effect is quite another. The delegation of Togo, while welcoming the initiatives I have just mentioned, calls on the signatorites of the START Treaty to ratify it, to respect all the obligations resulting from it and to conclude, as soon as possible, new agreements aimed at reducing and then completely eliminating other types of weapons, especially intercontinental ballistic missiles.

That is the appeal my delegation feels it must make to the nuclear Powers. In addition, we call upon the international community to be vigilant, for, in our view, true disarmament cannot be confined to the destruction of stockpiles of obsolete weapons; on the contrary, a refusal to perfect all such technology would be the real point of departure in the long process leading to general and complete disarmament.

(Mr. Pennaneach, Togo)

My delegation sees the merits and the value of bilateral disarmament negotiations; the results bear witness to them. But my delegation is among those that believe that bilateral action cannot replace the multilateral approach; they are complementary. In that respect, multilateral negotiations must not be marginalized: it is not only the major Powers that must work towards disarmament; it is the task of all countries large and small.

Therefore everything must be done to revitalize and support the role and the work of the Conference on Disarmament: to be general and complete, disarmament must be carried out in the framework of the United Nations. In our view, the Conference on Disarmament is the ideal multilateral negotiating body, the principal site of dialogue and cooperation for disarmament and the best example of the role of the United Nations in reducing and halting the arms race and of its commitment to that task. All necessary measures must be taken to strengthen United Nations action.

In that connection, my delegation unreservedly supports the recommended reestablishment of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Conference on Disarmament, whose work must result next year in an international legal instrument completely banning nuclear-weapon tests underground and in outer space.

My delegation is glad that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is becoming universally accepted. We welcome the accession of the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe to the Treaty and the stated intention of China and Frence to accede to it. The delegation of Togo welcomes even more warmly South Africa's accession on 10 July 1991, to the NPT and its signature a month ago of the safeguards agreement of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which strengthened the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

(Mr. Pennaneach, Togo)

But the best way for the States parties to the NPT and the signatories of the IAEA safeguards agreement to make a real contribution to safeguarding peace and to foster a climate of confidence and security among nations and peoples is scrupulously to respect the relevant provisions of those documents. That alone can lead to the complete elimination of fear and of the threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

In terms of nuclear disarmament, current world developments are paradoxical. It is astonishing that States are acceding to the NPT while nuclear experimentation goes on apace in certain parts of the world. My delegation hopes for intensified efforts to conclude as soon as possible a treaty formally and completely banning nuclear tests, which are so harmful to the environment and to the health of all living creatures.

At a time when we are all promoting the usefulness of collective action for complete disarmament, the expansion of the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty must be viewed not just as desirable but as absolutely necessary. With United Nations support, all the needed measures must be adopted and appropriate action taken to convene, in 1995, the conference on the extension of the Treaty. The unlimited expansion of the non-proliferation régime would be the best response to the concerns of the whole world.

The delegation of Togo has noted with great interest and special attention the report on the structure and elements of the future convention on the complete prohibition of chemical weapons. We are pleased to be able to note that agreement should be reached on the convention in 1992, and we hope all obstacles to agreement will be removed and that all differences will be sorted out, so that the convention's verification régime can be

(Mr. Pennaneach, Togo)

non-discriminatory and acceptable to all. We hope too that, as stated in the report, the ban will encompass the development, production, stockpiling, transfer, use and retention of chemical weapons.

Among the main concerns of my delegation is the problem of transfers of weapons, especially conventional weapons. From the Gulf War we learned of the role of international arms transfers in the outbreak of local and international tensions and conflicts. Like other delegations, we believe that such transfers are the principal source of these antagonisms, and we value the idea of establishing a universal register, kept by the office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations system the purpose of monitoring transfers of conventional arms and promoting transparency. Transparency is a prerequisite for limiting the arms race. But we think that the register, to be effective, should also cover other types of weapons, as well as the production, stockpiling and exportation of them.

The excessive accumulation of weapons of all sizes is, of course, the main source of the concern of the international community, and the past few weeks of debate in this Committee demonstrate the world community's determination to achieve general and complete disarmament as soon as possible. But in the view of my delegation, the chronic underdevelopment of the majority of States Members of the United Nations, along with its consequent poverty, is a great peril that cries out for attention. Even today, hunger, sickness, ignorance and illiteracy are undermining the underdeveloped world and are as fatal as war to the populations of certain parts of the world.

(Mr. Pennaneach, Togo)

While recognizing the intrinsic links among disarmament, peace, security and development, we must think about the real meaning of peace and security. Members will agree that genuine peace and security cannot be dissociated from development.

(Mr. Pennaneach, Togo)

We cannot talk about development and preach peace while at the same time devoting vast sums of money to the production of weapons. Indeed, just a small percentage of these expenditures would suffice to finance development activities in the developing countries.

As we have already emphasized, nuclear disarmament is our paramount concern. However, our ultimate objective remains general and complete disarmament under international control, which implies that no effort should be spared to reduce and completely eliminate chemical weapons, conventional weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Regional disarmament must thus be promoted. Hence the need - indeed the obligation - for the Department for Disarmament Affairs to organize seminars and workshops on a more regular basis so as to create and sustain awareness throughout the world, with the effective and full cooperation of the regional centres established by the United Nations for the promotion of peace and disarmament in our regions. Moreover, for these centres to play their proper role in peace and disarmament, it is important that their financial viability be maintained. That is why administrative expenditures must be included in the Organization's regular budget. We call upon members to adopt by consensus the draft resolution submitted in this regard.

Now that the cold war is over, we are witnessing social and political changes in a constantly changing world. Distrust seems to be yielding to trust; despair seems to be yielding to hope. States long divided because of their membership of opposing military alliances are finally reaching out their hands, preaching fraternity, friendship and cooperation.

This shows that the Committee's work is proceeding during a period when there is reason for much hope, hope that mankind will soon be living in a

(Mr. Pennaneach, Togo)

world free of nuclear weapons, where weapons stores are kept at the lowest possible level and where arms serve only for the legitimate self-defence of nations and peoples.

The United Nations and, more important, our Committee, have an essential role to play in bringing about this new world order, which we so ardently desire, an order that must be established by one and all on the basis of strengthened peace and security.

With these thoughts in mind, the delegation of Togo calls on the Committee to work in this direction. We trust that our efforts will converge and will in the end create a world environment free of war and hatred, a new world of peace, friendship and solidarity, a world where, in a word, life will simply be better.

Mr. FUENTES IBAÑEZ (Bolivia) (interpretation from Spanish): I am particularly pleased to participate once again in the Committee's work on disarmament, a subject to which I feel personally committed. The fact of being here brings to mind the preparatory meeting of the first conference on disarmament, at which was outlined with faith and hope the juridical structure that is now being strengthened little by little.

It would also be appropriate to pay a tribute to the memory of an eminent champion of disarmament, Ambassador Alfonso Garcia Robles. His firm voice and persuasive tone will continue to resound in all forums in which members endeavour to preserve mankind from the apocalyptic Armageddon of atomic war. However, I must say in passing that the so-called conventional weapons and other technological resources have recently been shown to have great destructive power.

(Mr. Fuentes Ibañez, Bolivia)

You, Mr. Chairman, who belong to a heroic country that had to fight bravely throughout history to defend its spiritual identity and sovereignty, are familiar with the misfortunes of invasion, occupation and war and their attendant suffering. Hence, your election as Chairman of the Committee is a fitting tribute to your skills as a patriot and a statesman who struggled steadfastly against the preponderance of force over reason.

My country, Bolivia, is one of those that has never aspired to be a military Power. We follow the teaching of Benito Juarez, a distinguished advocate of a racially mixed America, who incorporated into human rights the memorable concept that peace means respect for the rights of others. This is a lesson in supreme wisdom, as peace is not possible without spiritual disarmament based on mutual respect.

For this reason we welcomed the remarkable progress made towards the establishment of a lasting peace through the recent agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union on the reduction of land-, sea- and air-launched nuclear devices and the decision taken by the United States, even if only temporarily, not to buy 75 Stealth B-2 bombers at the astronomical cost of $865 million per unit. The money thus saved will, we hope, be used to provide for the needs of the most disadvantaged sectors of society, which are clearly no longer endemic to third-world countries.

Returning to the subject of disarmament, I believe that encouraging progress has been made in the last few years. Until recently, disarmament was a field in which everything remained to be done, and defence expenditure was always a State secret. The mere fact that arms reduction, registry,

(Mr. Fuentes Ibañez, Bolivia)

inspection and prohibition can be discussed clearly demonstrates that solutions of common interest are being sought to this problem.

Latin America has cooperated fully in disarmament. I believe we have gone beyond the time when political leaders were lured by theories of national security that were not always properly applied. These theories all too often served only to enrich the arms manufacturers and their agents, who persistently lobbied governments.

(Mr. Fuentes Ibañez, Bolivia)

To counter these insidious approaches we have always preached against war. Following the process initiated by our organization and the teachings of our experts and jurists, we have tried to identify the source of the evil and to create an awareness of the risks involved in the accumulation of weapons disproportionate to our needs; weapons that can be used against ourselves and others for no particular reason. That is why we believe that, instead of accumulating war matériel, our Governments should instead try to examine existing problems and avoid the possibility of confrontation by using the means available for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Everything seems to confirm that the East-West tensions have come to an end. The change in policy of one of the protagonists and the movement towards cooperation and understanding open up the prospects for a world, free of storm clouds, in which the new international order may come about. The collapse of a rigid system that embraced not only an economic and social order but a lifestyle has serious and varied implications. The East-West confrontation has disappeared, but many underlying problems remain and could re-emerge as enthusiasm for the change dies away.

Historically, there has been a growing gap between the countries which have achieved prosperity by monopolizing land and consumer goods in feudal times or by taking advantage of the natural resources and cheap labour with which the poor countries later contributed to the growth of the industrialized world. We hope that these differences are things of the past and will not lead to new tensions and conflicts between the North and the South. The end of the cold war will, we hope, make it possible for the international community to reflect on what path it should follow, always taking into account

(Mr. Fuentes Ibañez, Bolivia)

the underlying causes generated by whatever evils may exist. The mere possession of weapons would not be so risky if all countries sought, with calm and detachment, solutions of mutual interest and if pride and arrogance did not prevail in situations of flagrant injustice, which we are trying to eradicate.

One of the great successes achieved along the arduous road towards the elimination of chemical and biological weapons has been the announcement that the General Assembly may soon consider the final text of the draft Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons. This task is full of difficulties, given the complexity of the subject and the technological elements which have changed the debate into something that is in a class by itself in the field of international law. The various technical factors which have to be considered, such as the classification of the chemical components subject to prohibition, the ability of each State to agree, through reciprocal consent, to inspections or any other procedure that may be needed to clarify and resolve any matter that may be considered ambiguous or deficient, all reveal the complexity of the subject; to which we should add the need to reconcile the provisions of the Convention with the domestic law of each State.

In the report of the Conference on Disarmament, the text of which appears in Supplement No. 27 (A/46/27), reference is made in the chapter dealing with chemical weapons to what has been achieved in the preparation of a detailed list of safeguards for the prevention of any violations by the use of of chemical substances for prohibited purposes.

For this purpose, the technical secretariat of the Conference is to establish within six months after the entry into force of the Convention a

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data bank on specific means of protection against chemical weapons if there is any possibility of an infraction.

Once this part of the programme has been disposed of, as suggested by the representative of Argentina, Mr. Roberto Garcia Moritan, Chairman of the Third Committee of the Conference, the Conference should be asked to revise its agenda on the basis of its past experience. It should determine which areas require a new approach, taking care, if possible, to establish priorities with a view to closer and more synchronized cooperation with other disarmament bodies.

From the very beginning Bolivia joined in the process leading to the Treaty of Tlatelolco banning nuclear weapons in the southern hemisphere. We are therefore very sympathetic to similar agreements between countries in the Indian Ocean and other regions. We are especially pleased that the countries of the South Pacific have recently signed the Treaty of Rarotonga. This is a good example of the awareness of these Micronesian States and their reluctance to see their scattered territories in the Ocean exposed to nuclear tests. In the same spirit of solidarity we welcome any efforts to strengthen mutual confidence between countries that are linked by geography and history. We are glad to note the recent agreements between Argentina and Brazil, with the accession of Uruguay; and the common efforts made by Argentina, Brazil and Chile to implement new technologies for accelerating their progress.

Undoubtedly, the praetorian peace of the cold war deterred the great Powers from engaging in an armed confrontation. The same deterrent effect did not occur with countries linked to those Powers for ideological reasons or

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dependent on them for other reasons which made them liable to become zones of influence in which the pent-up waters of latent confrontation overflowed.

In order to forestall this possibility, we should promote the initiative already put forward within the United Nations for the establishment of a registry to control arsenals of conventional weapons. These registries could have two parallel data banks: one, under the aegis of the Secretary-General, containing general information about the sale of weapons and the other containing up-to-date regional information about weapons acquisitions with comparative parameters proportionate to the area, population, educational levels, social assistance, import and export volumes, gross national product and per capita income of each of the weapons-acquiring countries. On the basis of these data, we could determine the parameters appropriate for the national security of each State. These parameters would be based on the duly confirmed information in the data banks. Over a period of time we could thus elaborate regional and subregional agreements in which the signatories would agree to cooperate in every way possible in the tasks of economic and social development with a view to integration. They would undertake to refrain from using other than peaceful means to settle disputes, as prescribed by the Charter.

Before concluding, I would like to extend the congratulations of the Bolivian delegation to you, Sir, and to the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved elections. At the same time, my delegation wishes to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, and his efficient colleagues who have greatly assisted all of us. We also congratulate the Conference on Disarmament and the many Latin American

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diplomats who played an important part in it. I make particular mention of Ambassador Horacio Arteaga of Venezuela, who presides over it, and the representative of Argentina, Mr. Roberto Garcia Moritan, Chairman of its Third Committee. Both of them embody the peace-loving spirit of our countries and have done all they can to spare mankind the dangers of using nuclear or chemical energy for other than peaceful purposes. This is in itself a laudable achievement in the midst of an agenda which also includes matters of equal or similar urgency. I am referring, for example, to the prevention of the arms race in outer space or to any other form of mass attack with land or space weapons or with weapons based on the latest radiological technology.

The use of such techologies would constitute an attack on all mankind. This is another reason why we must absolutely reject any kind of arms buildup, if only at the experimental level. We must take a firm, principled stand on these matters and realize that we will always be on the side of the country that is the victim of aggression, as was stated here by the representative of Uruguay,

> "Between the aggressor and the victim of aggression it is never hard to choose. We will always be on the side of the victims of aggression".

Mr. AL-ALFI (Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): Sir, I am pleased to extend to you our warmest congratulations on your election as Chairman of this Committee. We are confident that, thanks to your diplomatic skills and personal qualities, you will lead the deliberations of this Committee to success. I am pleased to extend congratulations to the other officers of the Committee and to pledge our full cooperation in the successful discharge of the Committee's tasks. I seize this opportunity to express our appreciation of the unremitting efforts by Mr. Yasushi Akashi, the Under-Secretary-General, to facilitate the work of this Committee, and of those of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the Secretary of the First Committee.

It is indeed gratifying that we meet at this session at a time of considerable progress towards the attainment of the desired goal we all share, namely, general and complete disarmament. There is nothing strange in this. It is only natural, given the positive developments that have taken place in international relations, especially the ending of the stage of confrontation. Such progress augurs well for the near future on the economic and social levels and is an incentive to doubling our efforts for the good of all mankind.

I do not need to repeat here what has been said in detail by previous speakers who in their statements dwelt on the recent positive developments towards disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament. Rather, I shall focus on the most important highlights of that progress, especially the remarkable improvement in bilateral relations between the United States and the Soviet Union and the signing, in July 1991, of the Treaty on strategic arms limitation in addition to the Treaty previously concluded on the reduction of intermediate nuclear forces. We commend President Bush's initiative of 27 September 1991 and the positive response to that initiative on the part of

(Mr. Al-Alfi, Yemen)

the Soviet President, Mr. Gorbachev. We also welcome the decision by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to reduce its nuclear arsenals in Europe. It is our hope that this movement will continue and will be reinforced on the global level, so that our aspirations will be realized in the area of complete nuclear disarmament.

We should like also to emphasize the fact that individual initiatives and bilateral negotiations are not enough. We wish to stress the importance of collective efforts by the international community, with the full participation of all States on an equal footing, in the disarmament process. We should stress also the fact that the manner in which the issues of disarmament are addressed continues to be inspired by the priority set in the Final Act of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, namely, the priority of nuclear disarmament, as nuclear weapons threaten all mankind. We call for the redoubling of these efforts in order to ensure the success of the work of the Conference on Disarmament and the achievement of concrete results that would bring about the realization of the goal on which we all agree.

While we stress the importance of global disarmament, we think that the efforts and proposals concerning regional disarmament could go hand in hand with our overriding goal and not in isolation from it. Proceeding from that premise, my country supports all efforts aimed at achieving regional disarmament, for such efforts would eventually lead to the easing of tension and the building of confidence among all parties concerned.

In this context, we think that the peculiar characteristics and conditions prevailing in each region should be duly taken into account,

(Mr. Al-Alfi, Yemen)

without generalizing the principles and measures which might prove successful in a certain region even though they could lead to adverse affects in other regions. Taking due account of the peculiar characteristics of each region would eventually lead to guaranteeing the security of all the countries of the region in a sound equitable fashion.

Taking due account of the peculiar conditions and characteristics of each individual region would work in favour of the success of our efforts to bring about just and permanent peace in our region, which has suffered from instability for far too long. In this respect, we have before us several proposals that would contribute to the achievement of th s goal. One of those proposals is establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. There is also the proposals relating to the reduction of weapons and control of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East region. We welcome all these initiatives and proposals, and believe that, if implemented, they will promote security and stability on both the regional and the international levels.

In our view, the achievement of an early political just and durable settlement of the Middle East conflict, especially of the core of that conflict, namely, the question of Palestine, would be a fundamental and effective factor in securing peaceful coexistence in that sensitive region.

We believe that any proposal that aims at disarmament on the regional level in our region must take into account the security concerns of all States of the region at a minimum level of armament in order to ensure balance in the region and that such proposals should be even-handed and balanced, in dealing with all the States of the region and should lead to legally binding agreements under scrupulous monitoring and control.

(Mr. Al-Alfi, Yemen)

Above all, we believe that the region should be freed of all weapons of mass destruction - nuclear, chemical and biological - and that the necessary measures should be adopted to reduce the volume of conventional weapons in the region. The States of our region with the capacity to manufacture weapons should undertake that such measures are not breached in respect of any category of weapons.

The crisis does not lie in the lack of agreements regulating such matters. Rather, it lies in ensuring the commitment by all States of the region to such agreements. Therefore, we repeat the call to all countries of the region to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to accept the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards regime. All the countries of the region should undertake to refrain from using nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and should accede to the 1972 Convention prohibiting biological weapons.

My country supports the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty, and welcomes the declaration by France and China that they intend to accede to the Treaty, which will enhance the Treaty. We also welcome the accession of Zambia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa and the fact that Angola and Namibia have declared their intention to accede to the Treaty. This will accelerate efforts to declare Africa a nuclear-free zone and promote the economic and social development of all the peoples of Africa, as it will ensure peace and stability, which are badly needed in that continent. In this respect, we hope that South Africa's accession to the non-proliferation Treaty will lead to its declaring and disclosing all its facilities and all nuclear weapons, and materials in its possession in addition to its strict adherence to the safeguards regime of the IAEA.

(Mr. Al-Alfi, Yemen)

My country attaches great importance to the early conclusion of effective international agreements that would ensure the non-use or threat of the use of nuclear weapons against countries that do not possess such weapons. We also look forward to the achievement of the goal of universal accession to the non-proliferation Treaty and the universal application of the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and inspection regime to ensure that nuclear energy will be used only for peaceful purposes.

In this context, we must voice our extreme concern over the continued silence by many countries with regard to the Israeli nuclear armaments, especially in view of recent reports that Israel intended to use nuclear weapons on certain occasions. Those reports add weight to previous reports on the Israeli nuclear armaments plans and programmes. It is high time the international community took a firm stand on this issue in the light of such reports, before matters get out of hand and lead to a serious development that would obstruct any progress towards peace or regional disarmament in the Middle East. This call by my delegation assumes special significance since Israel rejects accession to the non-proliferation Treaty and refuses to place its nuclear facilities under the international safeguards regime.

The decision to convene a conference in January this year to review the partial test-ban Treaty emphasizes the need to end all nuclear tests. This is the view of most of the members of the conference. A complete test ban would represent an essential step towards ending the production of nuclear weapons. We appeal to all States to work intensively towards attaining that goal. We welcome the Soviet Union's moratorium on all nuclear testing announced by President Gorbachev early this month. We hope that the other nuclear States will follow suit.

(Mr. Al-Alfi, Yemen)

We look forward to the conclusion of a convention banning the production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and providing for their destruction. While we welcome the 1992 deadline for the conclusion of such a convention, we must stress the need for the protection of the legitimate economic and technical concerns of all States with regard to their chemical industries. There should be guarantees that the inspection and control machinery created by the convention will not be used as a means of obstructing the civilian chemical industries of the developing countries.

In conclusion, we express our hope that the First Committee's work and its conclusions at this session will reflect the positive aspects in international relations and embody the positive results so far attained in the area of complete and general disarmament. This is the hope of our peoples.

I take this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to assure you once again that we shall cooperate fully with you in order to ensure the successful carrying out of your mandate.

Mr. ROE (Republic of Korea): Allow me to express on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Korea my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee, as well as to the other officers of the Committee on their well-deserved election. Under your able leadership, the work of the Committee will certainly prove to be productive and successful, and I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

I also wish to commend Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and his staff for the excellent preparations for the deliberations of the Committee.

(Mr. Roe, Republic of Korea)

It is not without emotion that my delegation is speaking for the first time as a full member of the Committee. Our participation today certainly attests to the vast changes which have swept across the world during the past few years.

I take this opportunity to express appreciation of the kind words of welcome extended to my delegation by you, Mr. Chairman, and other representatives. My delegation will spare no effort to make the work of this Committee successful.

Under its Constitution the Republic of Korea not only is prohibited from any unlawful use of force in inter-State relations, but is obliged to make every effort to promote international peace and security. With our membership in the United Nations, we are now also bound, in all respects, by the letter and spirit of the Charter.

(Mr. Roe, Republic of Korea)

As my country has in recent history been the victim of several major wars on its soil and remains to this day a flash-point, its commitment to peace and security is unyielding. We firmly believe that the peace and security of our region, and indeed of any region, are inseparable from those of the world as a whole.

Arms control and disarmament constitute an important aspect of our commitment to international peace and security. The Republic of Korea is already a party to most of the multilateral agreements relating to arms control and disarmament, including the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), the partial test-ban Treaty, the biological-weapons Convention and the 1925 Geneva Protocol.

The end of the cold war has offered new opportunities and impetus for world-wide arms-control efforts. During the ensuing years we have witnessed many positive developments in arms control and disarmament at the global, regional, subregional and bilateral levels. Those efforts complement and reinforce each other and contribute to the early attainment of the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under international control.

My Government welcomed the signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) in July. That milestone Treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union in the nuclear-arms control process represents the first of their serious moves to reduce the level of strategic nuclear armaments and has thus set the stage for further reductions. We commend the initiatives of the United States and the Soviet Union to embark on a new series of discussions aimed at further enhancing strategic stability.

(Mr. Roe, Republic of Korea)

The bold initiative of President Bush on 27 September and the equally significant response and proposals of President Gorbachev demonstrate their further commitment to nuclear-arms reduction. Those measures highlight the usefulness of unilateral initiatives when political will is reciprocated in good faith.

My Government welcomed those forward-looking steps, as they have a positive and far-reaching impact not only on the ongoing process of nuclear-arms reduction but also on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We expect that those and future measures taken by the nuclear Powers will significantly reduce the danger of a nuclear catastrophe and contribute to the reduction of tension throughout the world.

Now that a momentum has been created for reversing the nuclear-arms race, we sincerely hope that the United States and the Soviet Union will redouble their efforts to turn the arms race into a disarmament race.

My Government considers the NPT regime to be a cornerstone of nuclear disarmament efforts. The NPT has effectively prevented the spread of nuclear weapons and has significantly contributed to international peace and security.

In this regard, we welcome the declared intentions of France and China to accede to the Treaty. We are also gratified to note that several other countries have recently acceded to it, or expressed their intention to do so, thus bringing us closer to the goal of its universality.

In our view, it is imperative that all States parties, nuclear and non-nuclear, should fully comply with the duties and obligations imposed by the NPT. It is incumbent upon States parties to conclude safeguards

(Mr. Roe, Republic of Korea)

agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as required by the Treaty, especially those parties engaged in significant nuclear activities.

In this connection, it should be recalled that the IAEA Governing Board adopted last month a resolution calling upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign, ratify and fully implement the IAEA safeguards agreement as dictated by the NPT. We now appeal once again to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fulfil its international legal obligations without further delay.

At the same time, it should be underscored - as the Director General of the IAEA aptly stated in his annual report to the General Assembly last week - that an urgent need exists for a more effective and reliable safeguards system.

Our concern with the proliferation of any and all types of weapons of mass destruction remains unabated. My delegation appreciates the progress made thus far towards finalizing the chemical-weapons Convention and strengthening the biological-weapons Convention.

As Ambassador Arteaga, President of the Conference on Disarmament, reported, major progress has been made towards the early conclusion of a comprehensive and effectively verifiable convention on the complete prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and on their destruction.

Building on the momentum already created, intensified efforts should be made to realize the early conclusion of the convention by resolving the remaining differences in the area of compliance and challenge inspection.

On several previous occasions my Government has made it clear that the Republic of Korea has never possessed any type of chemical weapons, nor will

(Mr. Roe, Republic of Korea)

it consider developing, producing or stockpiling such weapons in the future. We have also proposed that South and North Korea should jointly renounce chemical weapons as a means of armed conflict.

The biological-weapons Convention has also made an undeniable contribution towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. The Final Declaration adopted at the Third Review Conference of the biological-weapons Convention is a significant step towards ensuring effective compliance with the provisions of the Convention, especially with regard to extending confidence-building measures. My delegation supported the establishment of an expert group to consider technical issues especially on verification and compliance procedures.

With regard to international arms transfers, my delegation supports the recommendations of the group of governmental experts on ways and means of promoting transparency in the international transfer of conventional arms. We share the view of the Secretary-General that the ongoing efforts to establish a universal and non-discriminatory register of arms transfers under United Nations auspices would foster a climate conducive to voluntary restraint and more responsible behaviour.

We believe that such a register would constitute an important confidence-building measure by forming a complementary instrument to the objective information on military matters. That register cannot, however, be a goal in itself; rather it must be a catalyst for enhancing transparency and openness in other military matters.

(Mr. Roe, Republic of Korea)

While we have yet to elaborate further on the content and mechanisms of the register, we should carry forward the precious momentum towards the adoption of a single resolution by consensus. My delegation appreciates the efforts made by all the countries concerned to seek a consensus in this regard.

The report of the Disarmament Commission, introduced by Ambassador Hohenfellner in his capacity as the current Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, deserves our full attention. A new agenda item on a regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security has aroused considerable interest among delegations. The Chairman's paper has certainly provided a useful basis for discussion. We are particularly pleased to note that in the discussion of regional disarmament measures, increased emphasis is being placed on regional confidence-building measures - military and non-military - and on the importance of specific conditions and characteristics of the region. This trend is already evident in relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

The emphasis on regional confidence-building measures is particularly timely and warranted in the Asia-Pacific region. As the European experience has shown, confidence-building is an incremental process. The measures agreed to by the States members of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) were carefully developed through years of patient and considered negotiations and were then refined on the basis of the experience of earlier applications. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe is the outcome of these long efforts. The specific political, military and other conditions of a particular region or subregion should be fully taken into

(Mr. Roe, Republic of Korea)

account. In this regard, my delegation appreciates the efforts made by the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific.

The application of political and military confidence-building measures on the Korean peninsula, where the military edifice of the cold war era has yet to be dismantled, is not only relevant and timely, but imperative. President Roh of the Republic of Korea, in his statement before the General Assembly on 24 September, made a three-point proposal, containing wide-ranging political and military confidence-building measures.

The proposal points to the need to replace the armistice agreement with a peace agreement designed to prevent the recurrence of hostilities between South and North Korea. It also proposes mutual renunciation of the use of force and normalization of bilateral relations.

That proposal also underlined the importance of military confidence-building between the two sides in Korea as a prior step leading to the reduction of arms and armed forces. The confidence-building measures include exchanges of military information, advance notification of field exercises as well as troop movements, and the exchange of permanent observer teams to monitor each other's military activities.

Along this line of approach is the need to put an end to the long state of dissociation between the two sides of Korea through exchanges of people, information and goods.

In this regard, I am pleased to inform the Committee that, at the inter-Korean Prime Ministers' talks held recently in Pyongyang, an agreement was reached to work out a comprehensive document concerning reconciliation and non-aggression, as well as an exchange and cooperation between South and North

(Mr. Roe, Republic of Korea)

Korea. Representatives of the two Koreas will soon meet to follow up on this matter. While South and North Korea still remain far apart on many fundamental issues, it is our sincere hope that such an inter-Korean dialogue will make meaningful progress. Vast changes in the international security environment have underlined the renewed importance of the role of the United Nations in the process of arms control and disarmament. My delegation attaches great importance to the various disarmament-related bodies of the United Nations. In view of the ever-growing interest in the work of the Conference on Disarmament and of the changing international environment, we believe that it is time actively to explore ways to accommodate - in one way or another - those non-member States which have a strong desire to contribute to its important work. In this new era of opportunities and challenges, we need further creative thinking and more substantive and issue-oriented approaches on matters of major importance.

As we join in the challenging endeavours of the First Committee as a full member, we renew our commitment to the cause of disarmament, security and peace.

Mr. ERRERA (France) (interpretation from French): Sir, I should like first of all to congratulate you most warmly on the occasion of your election as Chairman of the First Committee. That a man of your stature, a man with your past experience, a man from your country should lead the Committee is for all of us a great reason for satisfaction, a significant symbol of the new times and an augury of success for our work.

The representative of the Netherlands has already made a statement in the general debate on behalf of the 12 members of the European Community. I shall

(Mr. Errera, France)

therefore not make a statement in this connection on behalf of France. In the light of statements made by some delegations, I only intend to recall the position of France on its nuclear testing.

France is carrying out nuclear tests on its national territory and this gives rise to two questions: Are these tests necessary? And do these tests present any risks? I should like, once again, to try to answer those questions.

Regarding the first question: Why does France continue to carry out nuclear tests? In order to meet its legitimate security needs and to preserve its independence and vital interests, France chose a strategy of deterrence based on the possession of autonomous nuclear forces maintained at a level of strict sufficiency. To maintain the degree of credibility of its defence means, France has no alternative but to continue this testing in the framework of a strictly limited programme at a pace and under conditions dictated by technological imperatives. It is on the basis of such imperatives that the number of these tests has constantly decreased.

(Mr. Errera, France)

France has welcomed the recent progress in reducing the nuclear overarmament of the two main nuclear Powers. We note with satisfaction, in particular, that these two Powers have started along the path of minimum deterrence, which from the outset has been at the centre of French doctrine. France recently again recalled that it was ready to take part, at the appropriate moment, in the process of nuclear disarmament.

France nevertheless notes that there are still enormous disparities between its own limited means of defence and the considerable nuclear arsenal remaining on the European continent. Even the effective implementation by the end of the century of the measures recently announced by the two main nuclear Powers will not substantially affect these disparities. France cannot disregard this persistent imbalance or the reality of those capabilities; to do so would be to jeopardize not only its own security but also the security of the European continent.

The second question is: do the French nuclear tests pose any risks? My delegation wishes to reaffirm once again that these tests are not prejudicial to the interests of the States of the region, nor to public health, nor to the environment; it was to prove this statement that France took the initiative of inviting representatives of the States in the region and several international missions of independent, renowned scientists to come and verify, for themselves, that the French nuclear tests are harmless for the environment, including from a geological point of view, and for the health of the peoples in the region, both locally and also thousands of kilometres from the test site. These various missions were able to carry out their research freely. Their reports have been made public. The most recent radiation-measurement intercomparison mission was carried out last March by three independent

(Mr. Errera, France)

laboratories working in parallel; one of them was an International Atomic Energy Agency laboratory. The missions' results have been published officially by the Vienna Agency. The measurements taken by them show that the artificial radioactivity around the French test site is no different either qualitatively or quantitatively from that found in the South Pacific or the South Atlantic.

It is therefore clear that the conditions in which the French tests are being carried out afford all the necessary safety guarantees protection of the environment and public health. Secure in the knowledge that these facts are proved, France has determined to follow its traditional policy of dialogue and transparency.

That same concern for transparency has led France to circulate each year a report to the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) on radiation monitoring in the South Pacific region. France has, moreover, set up a permanent station to monitor the environment in the South Pacific.

Finally, the French authorities give notification of every test explosion, providing details of the yield of each device tested, and every year France submits to the United Nations a summary list of the tests carried out the previous year.

In conclusion, then, do I have to emphasize that, amongst the nuclear Powers, these efforts at dialogue and transparency are unrivalled?

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.